

What's New in Literacy Teaching?



“FLOOD, FAST, FOCUS”: *Integrated Vocabulary Instruction in the Classroom*

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I know a lot of bits and pieces about vocabulary, but I can't seem to put it all together.

Vocabulary is really important, I know, but I just can't figure how to get it integrated into my curriculum. I keep falling back on workbooks.

—Exit slip comments after a professional development meeting

Josie, a fifth-grade teacher, was preparing to teach a new social studies unit on China. She took a weekend to read through the textbook, the trade books, anthology selections, magazines, and the electronic and other media that her district curriculum guide provided for instruction along with a few sources she had chosen. She kept a running total of all the vocabulary she thought might be difficult for her students; by Sunday night, she had 183 words for a 3-week unit, no instructional plan, and a throbbing headache!

Sound familiar? If so, join the club and realize that you are not alone. In the last decade, there has been a renewed interest in vocabulary instruction in the school curriculum. Vocabulary was, and is, a “hot” topic in education (Cassidy & Grote-Garcia, 2012), and plays a large part in the movement toward Common Core State Standards (CCSS; National Governors Association Center for Best Practices [NGA Center] & Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 2010) under consideration in a majority of the United States.

Yet comments and scenarios like the ones at the start of this article, expressing lack of confidence and clarity about vocabulary instruction, reflect what we often heard or received on exit slips when working with teachers in professional development and in our classes. Surveys of classroom teachers and reading specialists to find out what they needed to apply vocabulary research and best practices in their own classrooms (Berne & Blachowicz, 2009; Blachowicz, Fisher, Ogle, & Watts-Taffe, 2006) showed their number one question is How can we develop a consistent, comprehensive research-based approach to vocabulary instruction in my classroom, building, or district? followed by What are the best strategies or activities for integrating vocabulary into my curriculum? and What words should I choose for instructional focus?



These are the issues we will try to address in this article.

Some “Basics”

Before we jump right into instruction, there are three important research-grounded assumptions about vocabulary that underpin effective vocabulary instruction. First, word learning is incremental: Learning a word is not like an on–off switch but like a dimmer switch that keeps strengthening what we know (Baker, Simmons, & Kame’enui, 1995). Think about little kids who first learn *cat* and then proceed to call the dog *cat*, the bird *cat*, and so forth, until they realize that *cat* refers to furry, whiskered, meowing animals only...and until they go to the zoo and see the cats that roar and learn more about the word and what it can apply to. Thus, many meaningful exposures build the depth and breadth of our word knowledge.

Second, students learn more words than we can teach them, roughly 3,000–4,000 a year from kindergarten through 12th grade (D’Anna, Zechmeister, & Hall, 1991; Nagy & Herman, 1987). These numbers suggest that learning happens incidentally from all kinds of contexts: Books and other written media (Cunningham, 2005), conversation around school tasks (Stahl & Vancil, 1986), and conversations at home, in the park, or on the playing fields with friends (Hart & Risley, 1995; Snow, 1991), along with television, music, social media, and movies all build vocabulary.

These first two assumptions suggest that we need a FLOOD of words to surround our students. Not everything needs to be formally taught or assessed, but we need to provide rich language environments

in our schools and classrooms—well stocked with books, word games, puzzles, word-focused puzzle and riddle books, references, electronic tools—and TIME to use these things, to read widely and to write frequently. There also needs to be at least three levels of talk and writing going on:

1. Conversational—Where students learn the “rules” of friendly talk and note writing
2. Problem solving—Language students use when working in groups on an academic task
3. Presentational—When students speak or write to an audience to present their ideas

Third, it’s clear that good instruction can affect vocabulary learning significantly and good instruction can be either FAST or FOCUSED. FAST instruction can be all that is needed when a concept is well established and a new word needs to be attached to it. For example, most students know the word *hat*. Now that all the cool music dudes are wearing porkpie hats, *porkpie* is not that hard a word to teach.

Present a photo such as that in Figure 1 showing Buster Keaton wearing this hat with a flat brim and a cylindrical top, and the word is well introduced. Students will note that Bruno Mars, Justin Timberlake, and others are sighted wearing porkpies in every issue of *People* magazine. Concrete nouns like this are often easy to teach with simple explanations or visuals.

Figure 1
Porkpie hat



Other words are more difficult to teach and call for FOCUSED instruction. *Democracy* is an abstract concept that has many features, which also may differ slightly from country to country. This is a topic more readily developed within a unit with reading, discussion, and exercises such as feature analyses

Figure 2
Frayer model definition frame

Definition (from text)	Characteristics
a government by the people exercised either through direct action or through elected representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • people set up their own government • leaders elected • the majority decides • has a written constitution • has free and open elections • people are active in their own government
Definition (in your own words)	
a form of government where people in a country vote and elect representatives to govern their country	
Key Term: Democracy	
Examples	Nonexamples
United States	China
Canada	North Korea
France	Tibet
Brazil	
Argentina	
India	

or definition frames (See Figure 2) used in discussion and analysis.

So our mantra for thinking about one way we plan our vocabulary teaching is “FLOOD, FAST, and FOCUS” as we build a repertoire of instructional strategies.

The MCVIP Curriculum Model

At the same time interest in vocabulary instruction was experiencing a renewal, the report of the National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000) highlighted the fact that there was a dearth of instructional research on exemplary vocabulary instruction in real classrooms and the United States Office of Education began funding projects to address this issue.

The Multifaceted Comprehensive Vocabulary Instruction Program (MCVIP) was born and was stimulated by conversations around Michael Graves's (2006; Graves & Silverman, 2010) four-component curriculum model for integrating vocabulary into the curriculum, which reflected the same research base as much of our work (Baumann, Ware, & Edwards, 2007; Blachowicz & Fisher, 2010; Manyak, 2007).

This research base gives teachers clues to the important dimensions of an effective elementary vocabulary program, which integrates vocabulary into the overall curriculum rather than considering it a free-standing element (See Figure 3). In this model, the teacher does the following:

- Provides and engages students in rich and varied language activities
- Teaches individual general academic and domain-focused vocabulary
- Develops students' independent word learning strategies
- Stimulates and develops word consciousness

Fourth- and fifth-grade teachers in three states participated in the formative development of the MCVIP model, which produced both significant standardized and performance gains on vocabulary

measures for their students (Baumann, Blachowicz, Manyak, Graves, & Olejnik, 2009). This helped us develop models of instruction that ensured that the four components of good vocabulary instruction could be integrated into the school curriculum. Teachers needed to choose words for student learning and exposure well and decide how best to teach them. Along the way, they also developed and shared their own insights about integrated comprehensive instruction that enriched the model.

Choosing Words to Teach

Integrated vocabulary instruction starts by choosing vocabulary words that are central to the big ideas of your curriculum: These are words that are essential to your students' understanding of the topic under study. They may be frequent, general academic and domain-focused words, and they can include generative words, words with frequent roots and affixes that generate a host of related terms. The process for choice needs to be curriculum focused and teacher directed, ideally by teams who share the same goals (Blachowicz, Fisher, Ogle, & Watts-Taffe, 2013). Baumann and Graves (2010) provided an example for selecting math vocabulary:

First, identify the domain-specific words at an appropriate level (e.g., a middle school math teacher would work from Marzano and Pickering's Level 3 math list, which correspond[s] to grades 6–8). Second, identify words deemed to be important for instruction (e.g., words from the Level 3 math list that appear in the adopted math textbook, curriculum, or state standards). Third, select words for instruction by asking[,] "Is this term critically important to the mathematics content I will be teaching this year?" ... Fourth, organize the selected words according to how they occur in your curriculum. (p. 8)

The planning sheet in Figure 4 is used by many of our MCVIP teachers to help them organize their word choice and instructional thinking. Josie thought about all these guidelines and whittled down her list to those shown in Figure 5. She added the general academic words *paraphrase*, *rephrase*, and *visual image*, which she would use in her instruction and in her assignments to make sure that her students would understand what was being asked of them as well as to build their general academic vocabulary.

Figure 3
MCVIP components of effective vocabulary instruction

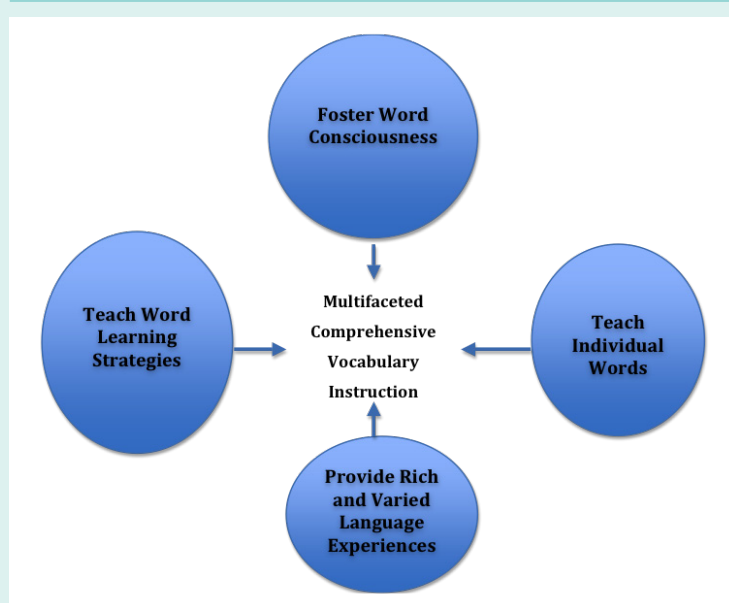


Figure 4
Vocabulary instruction planning grid

CHOOSING WORDS AND PLANNING INSTRUCTION-FAST, FLOOD, FOCUS		
Unit Name _____ Topic/Big Idea _____		
	ESSENTIAL FOR UNDERSTANDING	NICE TO KNOW
STUDENT STRATEGY words: <i>words students will figure out using the context or with other strategies; teacher scaffolding as needed</i>		
FAST words: <i>key vocabulary that the teacher teaches using fast synonym, TIW model or other brief instruction</i>		(Can be introductory phase of FOCUS instruction)
FOCUS words: <i>key vocabulary for which teacher uses a "AEIOU" "all the way through" method with vocabulary frame to support students</i>		
FLOOD words: <i>additional vocabulary for word wall, play, building relational sets</i>		(Most FLOOD words are in this category)

This was still too long a list for a 3-week unit, so she marked with an asterisk FOCUS vocabulary that she wanted all students to understand in text and be able to use in their speech and writing about the topic. These words were essential to students' comprehension of the unit and its big ideas about aspects of trade and government in Ancient China and the ways in which the emperor controlled the populace.

In planning for her teaching, Josie knew some of these words would be easy to teach (FAST words) because they were established concepts that have easy synonyms or explanations with examples or analogies:

- *Ancestor*—a member of your family who lives long ago
- *Fomenting*—causing trouble
- *Fractious*—becomes angry very easily

Figure 5
Words relevant to Josie's China unit

alignment	export (importer [ed, s, ing], port, transport, porter, portable)*	philosopher (philosophy)*
ambassador*	fared	precedent*
ancestor*	fomenting	pretext*
ancient	fractious*	profits/profitable*
anodyne	frivolous	provinces*
authoritarian*	Great Wall*	rebellion*
bastion	hamstrung	rephrase*
bilateral	import (importer [ed, s, ing], port, transport, porter, portable)*	ruler*
caravans*	intractable*	sanction*
civil service	invaders (invade [d, s, ing], invasion)	shogun
classes	jockeying	Silk Road*
commerce*	kerfuffle	standardization/standard
Confucius*	landlords	stilted
conspicuously	larded	succession
construction (construct [ed, s, ing], destructive)	legalism (legal)	tandem
cordoned	lithe	trade (trader)*
deployed*	measures	trade route*
dynasty*	onus	turbulence
emperor (empire)*	paraphrase*	visual image*
even-keel		weights (weigh [ed, s, ing], weight)*

Note. * indicates FOCUS words.

- *Intractable*—will not give in or change his or her mind
- *Precedent*—something that happened before that you can use for a new decision: “Because my brother got to go to Great America when he was 11, I should get to go. That was a precedent in our family.”

The online [Longman Learners Dictionary](#) site helped her check for easy, “kid friendly” definitions.

Then there would be FOCUS words that were complex and required more focused instruction: *authoritarian, empire, emperor, turbulence, dynasty, succession*, and others would be taught with “all the way through” methods (that we will share in a bit) that involved the students encountering new words in their reading, exploring their meaning in multiple texts and media, honing their knowledge through research, and using the words in problem solving and presentational talk and writing.

Josie also chose some generative word part for FOCUS that she could teach in relational sets of word families:

- the *port* family—export, import, transport, portable, and so on
- the *struct* family—construct, destructive, construction, and so on

She used the text project [Word Zones of 4000 frequent families](#) as a resource when selecting generative words.

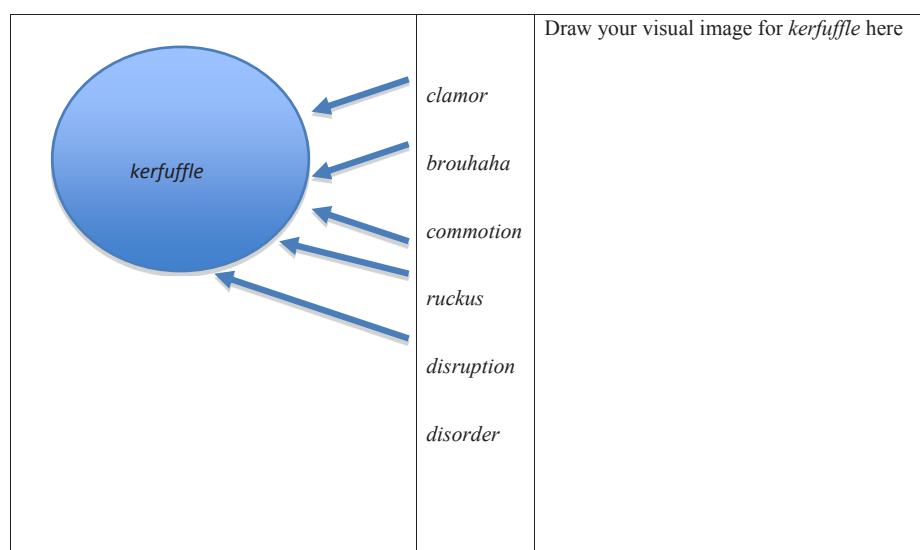
What did Josie do about all those other words? Some, like *weight* and *ancient*, she knew were familiar to her students. Others would be included in her word FLOOD strategies—constructing visible word charts, mapping and charting, puzzles, and other means for exposing students to a wide range of words that so that they could build relational

sets and personal word books. This is also one place where student choice and differentiation came in. Students chose FLOOD words for personal study beyond the “everybody” FOCUS words and included these in their personal word books. Self-selection allows your students with more prior knowledge to stretch their knowledge, but it also allows students who are just building a basic vocabulary to choose the words that are right for them.

Josie also included the word *kerfuffle* (unnecessary noise and activity) because she knew that her students would find it a funny word and would enjoy making a semantic map or schematic (See Figure 6) of related terms. She knew too that using these maps or schematics (“Let’s stop the *kerfuffle* in our classroom so we can concentrate.”) would stimulate students’ consciousness of words as well and strengthen the relational sets so necessary for incidental word learning. You can have as many FLOOD words as you want in a class to enrich the environment, but these are not assigned to all or tested in traditional ways. Rather, they form a backdrop of topically related terms for incidental learning.

With her FLOOD words taken care of, Josie moved on to planning FOCUS and FAST instruction for her unit that would integrate with the teaching

Figure 6
Semantic map and schematic words related to *kerfuffle*



of her big ideas. She sorted out the words that she wanted students to be responsible for using their contextual, word part, and reference strategies, with her scaffolding when needed, and organized her planning sheet. Let’s take a closer look at examples of instruction that reflect the four essential MCVIP components and how this instruction might look in the classroom.

Providing Students With Rich and Varied Language Experiences

Students need to be immersed in a language-rich environment to build oral vocabulary (Hart & Risley, 1995). They learn words incidentally by reading independently (Cunningham, 2005; Kim & White, 2008), by listening to texts read aloud, and through exposure to enriched oral language and by participating in conversation and discussion (Johnston, 2004). Students also learn words in the texts of increasing complexity that they read in school (Cervetti, Jaynes, & Hiebert, 2009). So the integrated vocabulary classroom needs to do the following:

- Include read-alouds from engaging texts that stretch the listeners
- Provide time and support for meaningful student discussion and writing
- Ensure time and support for regular personal, self-selected reading

Character Trait Analysis

Along with these environmental characteristics, instructional strategies that require the use of conversational, problem solving, and presentational language, in both speaking and writing, are also essential and necessary to develop FOCUS vocabulary. Integrated strategies engage students in

vocabulary learning as part of text comprehension, not as some separate area of study.

Character Trait Analysis (CTA; Manyak, 2007) is a rich and engaging process that focuses on vocabulary that describes personal character traits. Manyak’s research generated graded lists of vocabulary that can be used along with teacher-selected vocabulary to identify and track the development of characters in fiction, biographies, news reports, and the like. Students are engaged in read-alouds with the teacher or personal reading and discuss, as a group, whether characters or biographical figures or news subjects display the trait being presented and are asked for evidence from the text to support their view, an emphasis of research based instruction as well as of the CCSS (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010).

Josie engaged her students in a CTA semantic feature analysis charting the personal characteristics of the *emperor*, the *landlords*, the *porters*, the *ambassador*, and the *shogun* who each played a role in their unit of study (See Figure 7). Her first question, Was this person important to commerce and trade? started the ball rolling with students finding evidence in the text to support the notion that all persons were important in their own way:

- “The *emperor* directed the opening of the Silk Road for trade across Asia.”

Figure 7
Semantic feature analysis on China unit vocabulary

	<i>authoritarian</i>	important to commerce	ruled the provinces	fought bravely	<i>fomented</i> rebellion
emperor		X			
landlord		X			
shogun		X			
porter		X			
ambassador		X			

- “Porters undertook backbreaking labor carrying goods on long treks along the trade highways.”

When disagreements could not be settled by the text, students consulted references to find out that both emperors and shoguns were authoritarian rulers.

In addition, second-grade teachers at Washington School in Evanston, Illinois, had students track character traits across a number of books they were reading in Spanish and in English (See Figure 8). Students from four classrooms, both Spanish–English two-way immersion and general studies, read and shared the same books, and each classroom registered their analysis on a hall chart.

Students had to support their classifications with examples from the texts before the class would vote on how to place their checkmark. Fourth- and fifth-grade students from MCVIP classrooms visited the second graders and questioned the students and listened as they read selections from the text that supported their views. CTA is a productive process for working through a whole text or unit and both stimulates and supports student use of rich language.

Vocabulary Framing

In a language arts class, Dan, a fifth-grade teacher, was working on a genre unit of magical realism.

His students were reading *selchie* books such as *Greyling* by Jane Yolen (1991) and *The Seal Mother* by Mordicai Gerstein (1986). He applied Vocabulary Framing (Blachowicz, Bates, & Cieply, 2012), which is a pre-, during- and post-reading process using a graphic to focus and record students’ thinking.

The Vocabulary Framing process, called AEIOU, Activates and Engages students with the vocabulary before reading, has them use the frame during reading to focus Inquiry about the words to gather evidence to their meanings and to Organize their thinking, and calls on them to Use their notes for discussion and writing after reading. As in the emphasis of the CCSS, words are not pretaught but rather highlighted to activate knowledge or to be presented as a question for the students to work through in reading.

In this case, the frame Dan used was a Vocab-o-gram (Blachowicz, 1986), which is based on the structure of narratives. He displayed the following words on the smartboard: *Greyling*, *shallows*, *wail*, *slough off*, *sandbar*, *fisherman*, *selchie*, *joyously*, *grief*, *roiling seas*, *baby*, and *kin*. Dan asked the students to work as a group to predict how these words might be used in the story as well as identifying those words that were mystery words. Students used the Vocab-o-gram frame to organize their prereading thinking (See Figure 9).

Dan then asked students to each write a question stimulated by their Vocab-o-gram exploration. Some examples were Who gets *stranded*? What’s a *selchie*? Who or what is a *greyling* (a boat, a fish)? Why are there happy and sad words? And the all-time fifth-grade girl question, What happens to the *baby*? *Baby*, a word that all students knew that the teacher placed in the list to pique their interest.

Each student was assigned one or two words to locate in the reading, determine the meaning of, be ready to present to the group, and to read from the explanatory context or elaborate with a reference, during the post-reading discussion. Students could also select other words they encountered that they

Figure 8
Character Trait Analysis in Spanish and English

Book title Título del libro	Character's name Nombre del personaje	brave valiente	careful cuidadoso	clever listo	confident seguro de sí mismo	considerate considerado	honest honesto	intelligent inteligente	impatient impaciente	irresponsible irresponsable
The Recess Queen	Jean	✓			✓				✓	✓
La historia de Ruby Bridges	Ruby Bridges	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Amazing Grace	Grace	✓		✓	✓			✓		
Crisantemo	Crisantemo	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Figure 9
Vocab-o-gram frame on *Greyling*
(Yolen, 1991)

Vocab-o-gram		
Characters: Baby kin Fisherman Greyling	Setting: Shallows Sandbar kin	Problem/ goal: Roiling seas Sandbar stranded
What might happen: stranded	Resolution: Joyously grief	Mystery words: Slough off Wail selchie

wanted to add to the vocab-o-gram and enter into their personal word book.

After reading and the comprehension discussion following the selection, Dan asked the students to edit their vocab-o-grams in another color pencil to reflect their current thinking. They had refined their knowledge of *wail*, built knowledge of *slough off*, and confirmed knowledge of the other words. Dan decided that no further work with the words was necessary and, as an extension activity, had students use their vocab-o-grams as keys to write a summary of the book. Frames are excellent for use with cooperative groups because the sum of the group's knowledge is always greater than individual knowledge.

Teaching Specific Vocabulary

We have already shared examples of FAST instruction, which is teaching words as they are encountered or at different places in the instructional cycle. This can be done in real time as the words are encountered in a presentational mode. There are many ways to approach this instruction, but elements that are important include the following:

- Seeing and saying the word, as pronunciation can call up oral vocabulary
- Hearing the word in context
- Getting a definition, either teacher given or student supplied

- Making a personal connection with student use
- Participating in some semantic decision task
- Employing meaningful use

It's also essential that the students encounter the word in print, discussion, reading, research, inquiry, and writing.

Let's see what this FAST instruction might look like if the teacher wanted to teach the meaning of *buffet* (meaning "a strong hit"). First, the word is placed on the board. Then the teacher leads the students through the steps by saying the following:

1. Let's say it. It's not "boo-fay," it's "buff-it." (see/say)
2. Here's an example. When there is a windstorm, the tree branches *buffet* my roof and knock off shingles. (context)
3. What could it mean? (The teacher elicits, gives, or restates a meaning: It means "to hit with a lot of force.") Let's check. (The teacher gives or finds definition to confirm; optional, if time allows.)
4. Turn and talk with your partner and use *buffet* in a sentence about something you remember or imagine. Share out and give feedback on usage.
5. Let me ask you a question. Would your teacher want you to *buffet* others in the classroom? Why or why not?
6. Record *buffet* in your word book or sheet and add a synonym or short definition and a picture that helps you remember the meaning. (Teacher can use this as meaningful seatwork or homework.)

These steps are negotiable and can be organized depending on what the students already know but will help establish a basic routine for teaching individual words. Students can also learn this routine and be the "expert," directing the class lesson for their individual words.

Developing Students' Independent Word Learning Strategies

When stuck on a new word, students can use external context and internal context (word parts) to help. The building of declarative knowledge about types of context is one of the most developed parts of traditional word study curricula, and we won't

Figure 10
The vocabulary rule

THE VOCABULARY RULE

When you come to a word, and you don't know what it means:

1. Try to read it out loud to make sure you don't know it.
2. Look for **CONTEXT CLUES**. Read the sentences around the word to see if there are hints to its meaning.
3. Look for **WORD-PART CLUES**. See if you can break the word into a **root word** and **prefixes** and **suffixes** to help figure out its meaning. Look also for **word parts** like *vis* or *vid* ("to see") to help you decide what it means.
4. Think of a **WORD IN SPANISH** or another language that **looks** like or **sounds** like the English word. (In schools with diverse languages)
5. Try **ANOTHER STRATEGY** like **reading on**, **asking someone**, or using a **dictionary** or **thesaurus**.

duplicate it here. What is important is including procedural learning. Baumann and colleagues (2007) formulated "The Vocabulary Rule" (See Figure 10), which stresses the need for students to learn to use context and word part in a process-oriented way.

Process lessons for context clues would include teaching the major types of context clues (i.e., definition, synonym, antonym, example, apposition, global context) and then giving students plenty of practice in real contexts. Ask students to locate the unknown word and look around (before or after) the word for the types of clues presented. Students can also look within the word (internal context) for word parts that help them understand the word. What is important is that students find the evidence for their conclusion about the word and then end up by asking, Does this make sense?

For learning to use word part, a similar process

orientation is useful, engaging students in both composing and decomposing words. Josie had her students build a word ladder for the *port* family (See Figure 11). MCVIP teachers also keep a chart of roots and affixes across the year to make the growth of their knowledge visible to their students (See Figure 12).

Josie also used Elkonin-like boxes or chips to help students identify the meaningful parts of a word. When students tried to analyze the word

Figure 11
Word ladder for the *port* family

Origin: Latin **port** = to carry
se**port** = place where goods are carried out and in
trans**port** = carry across
porter = someone who carries
portage = carrying canoe or good over land between water
portable = able to be carried
de**port** = carry/send away
ex**port** = carry/send out
im**port** = carry/send in

Figure 12
Affix chart

PREFIX PREFIXOS "THE NOT FAMILY"	MEANING SIGNIFICADO	EXAMPLE WORDS	EJEMPLOS EN ESPAÑOL
dis-	not, opposite	dislike dishonest disappear disconnectado	disgusto deshonesto desaparecer desconectado
un-	not, opposite	unhappy unexcited unable	descontento desanimado
in-	not, opposite	invisible inconsiderate incorrect incomplete immobile	invisible desconsiderado incorrecto incompleto inmóvil
im-	not, opposite	impossible impatient imperfect	imposible impaciente imperfecto
non-	not, opposite	nonfiction	

been defined in many ways (Graves & Watts-Taffe, 2002). Some examples follow:

- Interest in words; awareness of how words work (e.g., figurative language)
- Enjoyment of words and word play
- Appreciation of the nuance of word choice authors and speakers make
- Recognition of different domains and registers for vocabulary (e.g., playground words versus school words, science writing vocabulary versus theater writing vocabulary)
- The ability to use words well and for one's own purpose in both speech and writing

profitable, they divided the word into syllables *pro/fit/able*, which had them focus on the *pro-* as a syllable meaning *for* or *supporting*. Josie placed these boxes on the board, which led them to:

profit	able
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This focused the students on the two *meaningful* parts of the word and reminded students that they needed to look for meaningful roots first when analyzing internal context. Another important learning is that not all words are well explained in context. Some contexts are actually misdirective, and then references can be used to help.

Stimulating and Developing Word Consciousness

Several studies conducted by Scott and colleagues have documented the impact of word consciousness instruction and environments on students' affective and cognitive growth in vocabulary (Scott, Vevea, & Flinspach, 2010). The term *word consciousness* has

We already presented ideas on flooding the classroom with words. In the following sections, we want to comment on three things (besides a welcoming and playful environment and volume of reading and writing) that MCVIP teachers reported as being critical to their success in building word consciousness for their students.

Keeping Words Visible

Teachers noted that having words under study be visible made a big difference in their students' word consciousness: Students could consult the charts when reading or writing. Requests for spelling assistance declined drastically, and students had visible documentation of their own expanding vocabularies. Some classes kept the word list growing in lines around the classroom. Other classes had portable charts made on chart paper and stored in rolls on shelves, organized by topics and domains with the labels visible. Still other classes kept computer lists that could be called up to the classroom computer or smartboard at will. By spring, each classroom had a chart dictionary of their content words for the year and a visible record of their learning.

Sharing the Richness of Words

Beyond synonyms, antonyms, connotations, and denotations, there is a wealth of knowledge about words and their usage that students can come to understand, appreciate, and use. Figurative language is a rich area for study (See Figure 13). For some of our teachers, themselves English learners, digging into this fund of knowledge was a journey of personal learning as well. Every quarter, two or three word relationships or figurative word types were examined through teacher presentation or student creation, usually with drawing, drama, or music involved. Students were encouraged to use these in their own writing. Dictionaries of idioms were purchased for each classroom to help with those many English usages that befuddle less sophisticated language learners. One teacher also collected figurative sayings from different cultures, a favorite being the Spanish saying, “She puts too much sour cream on her taco,” a statement describing an overdressed, overjeweled, or overly made-up female.

Each student’s personal word book contained a commonplace book section, which is a writer’s collection of quotations, words, and ideas he or she comes across in reading in language arts and content areas. Students selected examples of interesting writing from their reading and shared them with the class, part of the process Scott and her colleagues (2010) so beautifully named “a gift of words.”

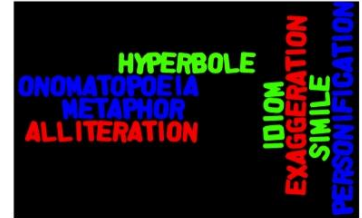
Engaging Weekly Review

Having a word wall and *using* a word wall are two different things (Harmon, Wood, Hedrick, Vintinner, & Willeford, 2009). MCVIP teachers were required to review 10–14 word wall words a week as *everybody words* for which all students were responsible. Though there was some grumbling at the start, the teachers noted in their final evaluations that having this ritual was one that was important for both their and their

Figure 13
Word splash on types of figurative language

Types of Figurative Language

- Simile
- Metaphor
- Alliteration
- Personification
- Onomatopoeia
- Hyperbole
- Idioms
- and more!



students, developing word consciousness. Many used some form of Word Wizard (Beck & McKeown, 1983), with or without point systems, for students to report instances of seeing or hearing the focus words for the week. To review the words, teachers drew from a set of quick and playful review activities, such as “Be a Mind Reader,” “Connect Two” (Blachowicz, 1986), “Hot Seat” and others (see Sidebar for online resources that provide step-by-step processes for these activities).

Student behaviors provided signs that word consciousness was flowering in the classrooms. More than once, teachers reported that students reminded them that Friday was waning and they had yet to do their review and game. One teacher, on being reminded, turned around to find the weekly chart and, when she turned back, students were quietly lined up with their word sticky notes in hand, ready to talk about their words they had seen that week.

Students became so attuned to the words that they often blurted out, “That’s one of our words” when they came across them during class or even on standardized tests. To keep up attention but to minimize interruptions, students were asked to use

Online Resources for Review Activities

- Be a Mind Reader: www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/04/lp328-03.shtml
- Connect Two: www.weac.org/news_and_publications/education_news/2006-2007/readingroomfeb07.aspx
- Hot Seat: www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/04/lp328-04.shtml

Figure 14
Halloween walk with vocabulary



the V (for vocabulary) hand sign whenever a new word was noticed. In one school, the students decided that their Halloween costumes should be augmented with vocabulary words (See Figure 14).

Some Final Words

This is an exciting time to be interested in vocabulary instruction. We know so much more about what makes a good program and how to make those teacher decisions that integrate vocabulary instruction into the curriculum. As part of our exit process for the MCVIP project, we interviewed both teachers and students to find out what they thought is an enduring understanding they took away from their participation. We will leave with their final words as you embark upon this experimentation in *your* classroom.

One student offered us a new metaphor for our approach:

I used to think vocabulary was just what we did in our old workbook. Now I see it's just everywhere! You can't learn

something new without learning new vocabulary. I think we should call it "Vocabulary 24/7."

A teacher summarized what we hope you might feel after trying some of our suggestions:

My principal observed me for a whole morning and was very positive about my instruction. She told me that I was attending to vocabulary the entire time and showed me her notes. I did fast teaching, I did focused teaching, and my classroom floods my students with words. I was actually kind of surprised by this and felt "Wow, I really get this now!" It has become second nature to me.

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